

**UNCLASSIFIED**

**STATEMENT BY**

**MAJOR GENERAL TERRY L. SCHERLING  
DIRECTOR, JOINT STAFF  
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU**

**BEFORE THE**

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**

**FIRST SESSION, 110<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS**

**ON**

**EDUCATION BENEFITS FOR THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES**

**MARCH 22, 2007**

**UNCLASSIFIED**

**STATEMENT BY  
MAJOR GENERAL TERRY L. SCHERLING  
DIRECTOR, JOINT STAFF  
NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU**

Chairman Herseth and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I greatly appreciate your commitment to our Nation's veterans and am grateful for the chance to testify regarding the educational assistance programs available to the National Guard.

As the National Guard transitions to an Operational Reserve, increasing its role on the global stage while maintaining its vital duties here at home, it is important that Guardsmen's benefits are commensurate with their sacrifice and their contribution. The House Veterans Affairs Committee is presently considering a bill which would change the structure of education benefits and increase their portability for National Guardsmen. While we greatly appreciate the intentions of this legislation, the "Total Force Education Assistance Enhancement and Integration Act" does contain some provisions with which we have some reservations.

Since its enactment 1985, the Montgomery GI Bill has been a great recruitment and retention tool for the National Guard. The education benefits encourage Guardsmen to join, and continued service is rewarded with ongoing benefits. Changes to this multi-functional system should be made only after careful consideration.

Under the proposed Total Force Montgomery GI Bill, members of the National Guard who earn eligibility while on an active duty status would be allowed to use that eligibility for 10 years after separation from the National Guard or Reserve. We believe that such a provision may diminish or even eliminate the benefit's retention value.

The “Total Force Educational Assistance Enhancement and Integration Act” proposes combining the Montgomery G.I. Bill – Selective Reserve with Montgomery G.I. Bill - Active Duty under Title 38 to make the benefit rate structure of these programs more parallel.

Under title 10, Reserve Components determine which Service members are eligible for Reserve Component education benefits. It is important that the Services retain this function since they are most able to identify those members who are eligible and those who should be suspended or terminated. Reserve Components have a vested interest in ensuring their Service members are taken care of, as it affects morale and ultimately retention.

Although we have not yet assessed the full cost of the various proposals, such changes could result in significant costs that are not included in the President's Budget. For this, and previously stated reasons, the Administration cannot support this legislation at this time.

I thank the Committee for their continued work on this important program and for their continued support of the National Guard. I look forward to your questions.